

FOREWARD

In casting about for a subject upon which to write this non-technical thesis my interest quite naturally turned to some current topic. In these days of our national emergency, with our recent selective service act, the interest of the entire country is now upon civilian military training. Because of my own interest in military training and because this subject is so current, I have chosen this topic for my thesis.

Civilian military training is the process of taking civilians from private life and giving them military training in the army for a certain predetermined period and then returning them to their private life. The object of this training is to form a nucleus of men in private industry with military training who may, if the emergency occurs, form the basis of an enlarged standing army. This training is not to make soldiers of all of our male citizens but to make citizens of all of our males. These citizens are thus prepared to defend our country and its ideals if the occasion should warrant.

Citizens' military training camps, C.M.T.C., have been abolished under the new selective service act, but the training received in the C.M.T.C. corresponds, to a certain extent, to that received by the present drafted men. Thus, I will try to give in this thesis some experiences as received by a person during six weeks training under the civilian military training program.

SUMMARY

This thesis is written to show the type of training received by a trainee under the civilian military training program. While the training as described in this paper is not the same as that received under the present selective service act, it will, I am sure, closely correspond to the present type of training. This paper deals with the training under the Citizens' Military Training Camps program.

The theme illustrates the activities of the trainee from the first day of camp until his final test. That test consists of the application of all the principles learned during the camp period. In the case of the coastal artillery camp, this test consists of the actual firing of the 155-millimeter field guns at a moving target six miles away. The theme follows the trainee through the work and play that he receives during a typical day at camp.

This thesis, in general, is a non-technical history of the Citizens' Military Training Camp at Fort Monroe, Virginia, from July 7 to August 5, 1937.

CITIZENS' MILITARY TRAINING CAMP

AT FORTRESS MONROE, VIRGINIA

JULY 7 TO AUGUST 5, 1937

While a student in the High School Cadet Corps, I first became interested in the study of military science as a profession. In my senior year of high school, while a cadet lieutenant in the corps of cadets, my interest in military training reached a new peak. Thus it was only natural upon graduation from high school, that I began to look about for further experience and knowledge in military training. It was at this time that the Citizens' Military Training Camps program was first brought to my attention. I immediately made application for Coast Artillery training at Fort Monroe, Virginia. My application was accepted, and I received orders to report for training in the second year course at Fort Monroe on the morning of July 7.

On the evening of July 6, I went aboard the Norfolk-Washington steamer to start my journey to camp. After a pleasant trip down the Potomac River and across the Chesapeake Bay during the night, at which time I met many of the boys who were to be future trainees like myself, I arrived at Fort Monroe at six o'clock the next morning. My first impression of Fort Monroe was its beauty.

Fort Monroe, Virginia, is situated on the Chesapeake Bay and commands the entrance to Hampton Roads. The fort was named after James Monroe, who was President of the United States when it was commenced. During the Civil War, the fort was garrisoned by one regiment of heavy artillery which participated in and witnessed the fight between the "Monitor" and the "Merrimac". The fort itself is built in the shape of a hexagon surrounded by a moat. Fort Monroe is today, without exception, the most beautiful army post in the United States.¹

After this initial birds-eye view of the fortress, I left the steamer. At the dock, the trainees were met by our future officers and placed, with our luggage, in army trucks. The trucks transported us to our camp. Immediately upon our arrival at camp, we were told to go to the mess-hall. Here we ^{received} our first taste of army food in the form of breakfast. At this time let me state that although the army expects and gets hard work from its men, it feeds the men well at all times. During my stay at Fort Monroe and also during my training at the R.O.T.C. Camp at Fort Meade, Maryland, I have yet to find the time that I was not given more food than I could eat. While I

1- from "Information Regarding O.M.T.C. in the Third Corps Area", 1937.

cannot say that every meal received in an army mess-hall was excellent, because a few, although only a few, were bad; there was always more than enough to satisfy everyone. Anyone that is stationed at an army camp under peace time conditions will, I believe, find himself well fed and well clothed.

After breakfast, the men were told to report to the commanding officer and present their credentials. When these formalities were completed, we were sent to the infirmary for a physical examination. All those who were found to be physically fit were assigned to their barracks and told to draw their bedding, clothing, and equipment. There were two hundred and twenty-five men received at camp and a picture of the barracks that housed these men is shown below.



The equipment issued to the trainees consisted of the following:

- Three woolen shirts, olive drab
- Two pairs of breeches, olive drab
- One pair of woolen trousers, olive drab
- Six pair of woolen sox
- Two pair of service shoes
- One pair of woolen wrap leggings
- One denim jumper
- One pair of denim trousers
- One denim hat
- One campaign hat with C.M.T.C. cord
- One raincoat
- One black necktie
- One web waistbelt
- Two sheets and one pillow case
- Two blankets (wool)
- One meat can
- One canteen and one aluminum canteen cup
- One canteen cover
- One knife, one fork, and one spoon
- One cartridge belt
- One first aid pouch
- One field pack with shelter tent equipment
- One Springfield 30-cal., model 1903 service rifle

A picture showing the drill uniform without the field equipment is shown at right.



After the equipment had been issued, the men returned to the barracks. The beds were made up and the barracks were policed. Then all civilian clothes were turned in and placed under lock and key. When the civilian clothes had once been turned in, they could not be drawn again until the next week-end leave. Thus, the soldiers were forced to remain in uniform at all times while they were within the camp area.

By the time these duties had been performed, the morning was over. At 12:15 dinner was served in the mess hall. The afternoon was spent cleaning rifles for inspection at the retreat formation that evening. When all the assigned work was completed, the men were permitted to loaf about or explore the post. After supper and the retreat formation were over that evening, a tired group of men retired to the barracks to either go to sleep or enter whole-heartedly in one of the many ball sessions or card games in progress. This completed the first day of camp.

The remainder of the first week of camp was spent in lectures, simple drill instruction, and the general accustoming of the men to the standard camp routine.

Having given an account of the trainees' first day in camp, I will next try to give a description of a typical day at camp. The men were awakened at 5:45 in the morning by the sound

of the bugle. At six o'clock the companies were formed to stand the reveille formation. After reveille, the companies were marched to the drill ground by the sea-wall for the morning exercises. When these mass exercises were over, the men were marched back to the barracks to prepare themselves for breakfast.

Breakfast formation was held at 6:30. After breakfast the barracks and camp area were policed up. At 7:30 drill call was sounded, the companies were formed, and the men marched to the parade ground for close order drill. This close order infantry drill was held from 7:30 to 8:15, whereon the men were taken to the baseball stands to listen to lectures. From 8:15 to 8:45 the officers of the camp gave lectures to the men seated in the stands. These lectures varied from day to day. The topics covered were; first aid, hygiene, citizenship, military and civil courtesy, and American history and government.

At 8:45 the infantry drill was resumed. Drill, this time, lasted until 9:30, when the companies were marched back to the barracks. The men, then, changed from their drill uniforms into the blue denims. On a bugle call at 10:00 A.M. the companies again formed in the "company street". A train nicknamed the "General Pershing" then steamed up the street, and the men boarded the train. The train took the companies to the upper end of the Post where the field guns were located. These field

guns that were used by the C.M.T.C. were 155-millimeter, mobile field artillery pieces set in place with their spades fastened to concrete footings. In this manner they were considered stationary coastal guns. Two pictures of these 155-millimeter guns are shown below.



while at the guns we were given instruction and experience in their use. The instruction on the 155's was divided into two sections. Battery "A" would receive theoretical instruction about the guns while Battery "B" was having drill with dummy ammunition. The theoretical instruction consisted of the nomenclature of the piece, the fire power and rate of fire, principles of operation, and range finding and spotting principles and execution, i.e. all data pertaining to the use and operation of the gun. The drill with dummy ammunition consisted of practice in the art of loading and firing the piece. After forty-five minutes the two batteries would exchange instruction. At 12:00 noon all men would return to the barracks to prepare for mess.

Mess call was sounded at 12.15. After dinner, the afternoon program was varied from day to day. Some days the afternoon was devoted to supervised athletics, such as, swimming, boxing and wrestling, baseball, volley-ball, track, and tennis. Other days field trips were taken. Some of these trips were taken to; Yorktown, to view the historical points of interest; Langley Field, to see the air force in operation and its planes and shops; Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Yards, to see the construction and maintenance of large naval and private ships. On several afternoons, trips were made to the nearby beaches for amusement and pleasure or fishing trips were made on the bay.

In order to show that all afternoons were not made for play, the men were required to work on some of the afternoon periods. This work consisted of demonstration and instruction in Chemical Warfare Service, Signal Corps, Ordnance, Transportation, and other divisions of the United States Military Service.

Retreat formation and inspection concluded the actual work for the day. When supper was over, the men could do as they pleased around the Post. Band concerts, movies, letter writing, table tennis, pool, and just plain relaxation constituted the principal forms of amusement indulged in by the boys during the evenings. Every Friday night, a dance was held for the trainees, to which girls from the surrounding sections were invited. Finally, heavy sleep completed the day's activity.

Having given a report of the activities of a trainee in the C.M.T.C. at Fort Monroe for a typical day, I will add that the greatest thrill at camp occurred when we fired the 155-millimeter guns. The trainees were permitted to fire live ammunition with the guns. These men, with their officers, collected, computed and posted all fire data. I will not attempt to explain how the range and elevation were obtained. A description of the operation of the base and stations to find two angles and a known distance so that the exact position of the target may be plotted, would require too much space for this theme. I will state that from the data received from the base

end stations the position of the target was plotted in the plotting car. Here the range and deflection were determined to the position that the target would occupy at the time the shell was fired and reached its objective. The factors taken into consideration were; wind velocity, speed of target, rotation of the earth, deflection caused by the spinning of the projectile, and the size of powder charge used. The elevation and deflection data were phoned to the firing point five seconds before the signal to fire. The sights were set and the command to fire was given on the all clear signal. The projectile was sent on its journey six miles across the bay toward the target. Battery "A" received the distinguished honor of having four "hits" out of six rounds. Thus, it may be seen that a well coordinated gun crew may be put together, and with about a months training it is prepared to render acceptable service to our country if needed.

A picture is shown on the next page of a gun crew in action during the actual firing of the 155-millimeter guns. The picture was taken just as the breech was opened after the firing of one round of ammunition.

It has been the purpose of this paper to give the civilian in private life a small insight into army life. Thus, he may, if called into active service under the selective service act, have a slight knowledge of what to expect from the army and what the army may expect from him. I have tried to show that



a civilian if given the proper training can be of just as much value to his country in its defense as the so-called professional soldier. Lastly, I have tried to develop within the civilian a keener and more profound interest in the military service. It is not my desire to cause everyone to take some type of military training, but to give him a higher opinion of those men who receive this training. I hope that this theme will in some small way accomplish these purposes.

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JOHN DOUGLAS CUSTER

November 28, 1940

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